

General Grenville M. Dodge House  
605 South Third Street  
Council Bluffs  
Pottawattamie County  
Iowa

HABS No. IO-30-5

HABS  
IOWA  
78-COUB

1-

An Addendum to  
General Dodge House  
Third Street  
Council Bluffs, Iowa  
in HABS Catalog (1941) (*drawings*)

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. IO-30-5

## GENERAL GRENVILLE M. DODGE HOUSE

HABS  
IOWA  
78-0002

1-

An addendum to  
General Dodge House  
Third Street  
Council Bluffs, Iowa  
in HABS Catalog (1941)

Address: 605 South Third Street, Council Bluffs, County of  
Pottawattamie, Iowa

Present Owner: F. L. Taylor

Present Use: Apartment House

Statement of The following is excerpted from: United States  
Significance: Department of the Interior, National Park Service.  
The National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings,  
Theme XV. Westward Expansion and the Extension of  
the National Boundaries to the Pacific, 1830-1898.  
Transportation and Communication. 1960:

"This building was the home of Grenville Mellen Dodge, well-known railroad builder and politician. Among prominent people who were entertained in the Dodge home were U. S. Grant, Theodore Roosevelt, William G. Harding, William McKinley, General William T. Sherman, General John A. Logan, General John C. Black, and Archbishop John Ireland.

"The fourteen room mansion was constructed in 1869 or 1870 at a cost of \$35,000. At the time it was completed it was described as one of the most beautiful houses in the state. When it passed out of the hands of the Dodge Estate in 1950, it was described as one of the finest examples of Victorian architecture in this section of the country.

"Born in Danver, Massachusetts on April 12, 1831, Dodge became one of the nation's foremost railroad builders. In 1852, soon after receiving a diploma as a military and civil engineer the preceding year, he was given a position with an engineering party on the Illinois Central Railroad. For several years he was engaged in making surveys for various railroads across Iowa. From 1855 to 1861, Dodge was engaged in railroad construction in Iowa, in mercantile business in Council Bluffs, helped organize a bank and made some reconnaissances and surveys west of the Missouri River.

"When the Civil War broke out Dodge volunteered his services. His war services, both as soldier and engineer, were distinguished. For his skill in building bridges and reconstructing

HABS  
Jowa  
78 COVB  
1"

and equipping railroads for the army, he was highly commended by General Grant.

"In 1866 Dodge was made chief engineer of the Union Pacific which was then under construction and it was under his general supervision that the first transcontinental railroad was completed four years later. In 1870, he resigned as chief engineer. The following year he became chief engineer of the Texas and Pacific. When the road failed during the Panic of 1873, he joined Jay Gould in the railroad development in the Southwest. During the next ten years he assisted in the building of nearly nine thousand miles of track. In the late 1880's, he was interested in construction of the Denver, Texas and Fort Worth and the Denver, Texas and Gulf. He was president of the Union Pacific, Denver and Gulf when that system went into bankruptcy in 1892.

"Dodge ranks as one of the great railroad builders of the world. His railroad surveys alone totaled approximately 60,000 miles. He was for half a century an active railroad projector, builder, director, and financier and was reputed to be the ablest railroad lobbyist of all times. He was very active politically in Republican circles. Dodge died in 1916."

#### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- A. Original and Subsequent Owners: General Grenville Mellen Dodge - original owner.  
In Dodge Estate until 1950.  
F. L. Taylor (owner as of write-up on December 1961).
- B. The following is a descriptive newspaper account from "General Dodge's New House: A Fine Edifice - Its Builders and Its Cost," Council Bluff Non-Parail, October 14, 1870, page 1:

"Three years ago Gen. G. M. Dodge determined to retire from active business activities and to endeavor to lead a serener life than that of Congressman or that of a chief engineer of the Union Pacific railroad. Having reached this determination, he at once set about the construction of a spacious, convenient and elegant residence. Having selected the site of his future home, no time was lost in improving and ornamenting the grounds. The site selected was out lot 6 in Jackson's addition--one of those easily accessible promontories scattered along the slopes of our steep bluffs--that serve as standpoints from which to survey the surrounding loveliness of the landscape, as well as the business activities of the railroad center. His grounds front two hundred feet on Bond street, running back four hundred feet to the top of the Bluffs. The grading down of Bond

street, compelled the General to protect his premises by building of a substantial stone wall five feet high along the entire front of the lot, excepting a space for carriage way. The wall, however prepared the visitor to expect corresponding substantial improvements upon the grounds, and these expectations are not doomed to disappointment by a thorough and close inspection. The grounds are tastefully laid out, terraced and set to trees, shrubbery, grapes, flowers, etc., mainly the work of the General's own hands. The building which supplements this fine place is situated about a hundred feet from the street--a sloping grass plot in front. The structure is a two-story mansard brick with full mansard roof. The building fronts to the west, the main entrance being covered by a piazza. Passing up the front steps you enter the building through massive black walnut doors, and find yourself in the main hall. To the left are the parlors, presenting when thrown together, a room 16 by 38 feet--fitted up with grates, and white marble mantels, etc. The front room on the south side is the library, opening out through plate-glass doors upon a conservatory to the south, and having on the west a large bay window. This is a charming room sixteen feet square, most elaborately and conveniently fitted up with book cases. There is a superb secretary, constructed of black walnut and ornamented with white walnut mouldings. The book cases are also of black walnut--in fact the whole wood work except the floor and blinds--of the parlor, the halls, and the library, and the conservatory, is of black walnut with white walnut mouldings--the whole oiled and varnished. Folded doors of massive walnut, hung with silver tipped, bronz butts afford passageway from the main hall into the parlor and library. Back of the library is the dining-room, 16 by 24 feet with two large windows opening out to the south. At one corner of the dining-room is the china closet with a small iron safe for the keeping of silver-ware. This closet communicates with the kitchen by an opening through the partition. Back of the dining-room is the kitchen, 16 x 16 feet. Recognizing as the most important room of the house, the General spared neither pains or expense to provide every convenience that observation and ingenuity could suggest. The cooking stove is of the most improved pattern, and the pumps, water resevoirs, sinks, chests of drawers, etc. all are in the latest and most improved planning. The wood work of the dining-room and the kitchen is of pine, oiled and varnished. From the kitchen stairways lead to the cellar and to the main hall on the second floor. The basement contains the laundry, the wine cellar, the vegetable room, the ice room, and the furnace for heating the building.

"From the main hall we pass to the second story up a winding staircase of black walnut steps and rails, with

cherry balusters. On the north side of the house and over the parlors are two fine chambers for guests. These rooms are 15 x 16 feet--fitted up with elegant marble wash stands, supplied with hot and cold water; and with ample recesses and water closets. On the south side of the building and over the library, with windows opening to the west and south, is the General's bed-room, 14 x 16 feet. Off this room and over the stairway is an alcove 10 x 11 feet, containing both tub, water closets, and marble wash stand all supplied with hot and cold water. Over the dining-room is a chamber 16 by 16 feet. Back of this room and over the kitchen is a fine chamber 16 by 20 feet. The finish of the second floor corresponds with that of the first--oiled and varnished, black walnut, with white walnut mouldings.

"Black walnut rail and cherry balusters with oiled pine steps furnish the winding stairway to the third floor, where we land in a dancing room 24 by 38 feet. At the back of the room, in the projection made by carrying up the kitchen walls there is a water tank capable of holding one hundred barrels. A floor laid over this tank forming a very convenient place for 'music by the band.' The platform and tank does not extend into the room beyond the rear wall of the main building. Occupying the south half of the building, are three rooms for servants--front room 14 x 16; middle room, 14 x 18; back room, 14 x 20. The whole building is lit with gas and warmed from a furnace in the cellar. All the rooms in the building are large and well lighted, and windows being of plate glass and furnished with blinds. The blinds are of oiled pine, and folded back into pockets, affording a fine paneled finish to the casings of the windows.

"The plan of the fine building was originally drawn by W. W. Boyington, of Chicago, but his designs were not carried out intact. The General modified them somewhat to secure advantages and conveniences not taken into account by the architect. The whole work has been done in the most elegant and substantial manner, the General overseeing it all throughout every step. The brickwork and plastering was done by George Bond; the carpenter work by Williams & Monroe; the painting and glazing by H. C. Jensen and Thomas E. Rudd and the plumbing and gas fitting by a firm in Omaha. All have performed their work excellently well, but too much praise cannot be bestowed upon the carpenter work and the painting. By this job William and Monroe have shown that it is within the capabilities of Council Bluff mechanics to do the finest kind of work in a manner not to be excelled by the workmen of any city in the land. The same is true of the painters. They are young men, but they are masters of the art of house painting.

HABS  
Jowa  
78-0008  
1-

"The building has been erected at the cost of thirty-five thousand dollars. It is an attractive ornament to our city, and it rejoices our heart that it is to be the abode of a man who has never swerved in his devotion to the interest of our city and the great West during a residence here of seventeen years."

C. Notes on Alterations and Additions:

Northwest, one-story, front porch added between 1907 and 1916. Conservatory at southwest corner and rear porch at southeast corner considerably remodeled since date of construction. Addition of two sunrooms, second floor, south elevation. The interior has been altered for use as apartments.

D. Important Old Views: In possession of Iowa State Historical Society (Dodge Papers) and F. L. Taylor.

E. Bibliography:

- Council Bluffs Non-Pareil. Council Bluffs, Iowa. October 14, 1870.
- Dodge, Grenville Mellen. Papers. Iowa State Department of History and Archives. Vol. 16, 115, 321. Des Moines, Iowa.
- Pyper, Walter W. "Grenville Mellen Dodge and Nineteenth Century America: Growing Pains of a Man and A Nation." Unpublished senior thesis, Department of History, Princeton University, 1960.
- Tallmadge, Thomas E. Architecture in Old Chicago. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941.
- Tallmadge, Thomas E. The Story of Architecture in America. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1927.
- United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. The National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. Theme XV. Westward Expansion and the Extension of the National Boundaries to the Pacific, 1830-1898. Transportation and Communication. 1960.
- Wolfe, J. M. Council Bluffs Directory, 1869-1870. Council Bluffs: Evening Bugle Book and Job Printing House, 1869.

Prepared by Martin E. Weil  
Student Assistant Architect  
National Park Service  
August, 1963  
Supplemented and edited by John C. Poppeliers  
Editor, Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
August, 1963

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The house was built by General Dodge, a well-known railroad builder, politician, and Union Army officer, in 1869. It was designed by William W. Boyington, a 19th century, Chicago architect. It is a significant mid-19th century Iowa residence that employs many elements of the French Second Empire style.
2. Condition of Fabric: Structurally in good condition. Middle bedroom on second floor has been partitioned. Fireplace mantels and double doors from the parlors have been removed to the Joslyn Museum in Omaha, Nebraska.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: 58'-4" x 54'-4"; two-and-a-half stories; irregular layout.
2. Foundations: Rubble foundations, walls on the perimeter. On the west exterior, the wall has been faced with limestone. Brick foundations support walls of central hall.
3. Wall construction: Red brick load bearing walls. East wall is laid in common bond.
4. Structural system, framing: Framing that supports the roof and floors is 16" on center. Stud construction with mortise and tenon joints.
5. Porches: Porch on west and north sides of house: Five bays on each side. The bays at the corner contain a Palladian-type opening. Other bays supported by Doric columns. This was built after 1907 to replace a porch on west side. Conservatory on south side of house has five bays. The corner bay is curved. Early photograph shows only the three south bays were glazed, other two bays filled in with siding. Back porch replaced and sun porch added on second story after 1907, above conservatory.
6. Chimneys: Four brick chimneys; two chimneys on north wall serve fireplaces in the double parlors and bedrooms above. The chimneys are contained within the building rather than protruding on the exterior walls. In the attic story the chimneys are corbeled inward so that they do not emerge through the mansard roof's steeply-pitched sides. Chimney on south side serves fireplaces in dining room, library, and bedrooms on the second floor above. Chimney on east side serves the kitchen.

HABS  
Jawa  
78-0008  
1

7. Openings:

- a. Door: Front--double walnut doors; each door has a circular recessed panel in the center; below the circular panel is a rectangular panel with a curved top; the upper half of the door is glazed; the glazed panel is curved top and bottom.
- b. Windows: All are double-hung sash windows. One-over-one light on the first floor and attic. Two-over-two lights on the second floor and bay window in the library. Windows have slightly curved top. The labels over windows on the first and second floors are of terra cotta with an oversized keystone which has a geometric design in low relief. Windows on west wall of front parlor and dining room and south wall of library extend to the floor.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Mansard roof covered with wooden shingles which are laid with round and square ends to form rows and patterns. Wood corner boards cover the joints at the corners of the roof. Flat area on top of roof covered with copper. Access to the roof is through a trap door in the flat portion.
- b. Cornice: Wood gutters form the cornice of the roof. Gutters supported on wood scroll brackets.
- c. Dormers: The dormers in the mansard roof are covered with wood shingles. The windows are slightly arched at the top. The roof of the dormer has same curve.

C. Technical Description of Interior

- 1. Floor plans: First floor: Asymmetrical central-hall plan with U-shaped curve staircase at end of hall. Back stairs behind central staircase. Two parlors on north side of hall connected by double sliding doors. Library, dining room, and kitchen on south side of hall. Second floor: Central hall--Two bedrooms on north side of hall; three bedrooms on south side of hall; bathroom at east end of hall. Attic story: Three servants' rooms on south side; rest of floor opened for ballroom.
- 2. Stairways: Main staircase: From first to second floor--U-shape, black walnut rails and treads, cherry balusters. Second to third floor--straight run, black walnut rails, pine treads, cherry balusters. On both stairs there is jig-saw scroll design along the stringer.



Back stairs: From basement to kitchen--straight run.  
From kitchen to second-floor hall--L-shaped, tongue-and-groove wainscoting.

3. Flooring: Black walnut floors used throughout. In the parlors there is a simple border of two strips of light wood at the edge of the floor.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
5. Doors and doorways: First floor: Central hall--black walnut arched doors set in deep paneled casements in brick wall. Double doors lead to dining room and front parlor. Single door leads to library and back parlor. Second floor--doors have glazed transoms.
6. Decorative features and trim: Cast plaster rosettes on ceiling in all major rooms on first floor and southwest bedroom on second floor. Cast plaster moldings in all major rooms on first floor and all bedrooms on second floor. Pine interior shutters fold into black walnut window jambs in all rooms on first and second floors. Niche in wall of front staircase now plastered over.
7. Notable hardware: Silver-tipped bronze butt hinges on doors on first floor.
8. Lighting: Gaslight fixture in room that contained water tank behind ballroom. Gas chandelier in ballroom. Electrified lamp on newel post in front hall; base is covered with polychrome enamel design.
9. Heating: Central heating furnace installed when house was built; present plant is said to be original; fireplaces in parlors, dining room, library and southwest bedroom. Flue opening for cooking stove in east wall of kitchen.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: Situated on north-south axis. Located on southeast corner of Third and Story Streets. West wall (front) faces Third Street.
2. Outbuildings: Barn for horses and carriages on southeast side of house.
3. Landscaping, walks, enclosures: House sits above Third Street behind retaining walls. Land on east side of house rises sharply to a bluff above. Land is laid in terraces. Front walk to house is from Third Street.

Addendum to  
General Grenville M. Dodge House  
605 S. 3rd St.  
Council Bluffs  
Pottawattamie County  
Iowa

HABS No. IA 30-5

HABS,  
IOWA,  
78-COUB,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243